

## **School 21 Air Quality Study**

### **Key Messages on Results**

- **Purpose of School 21 Air Quality Study was to evaluate levels of air toxics in the area.** Based upon a complaint received concerning potential air quality issues in the area, the Office of Environmental Services for the City of Indianapolis (City) and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) began collecting air monitoring information in 2000. The project included over 10 governmental agencies and interested parties. Through a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, an Air Quality Study was conducted. The results of the study are now being presented to the public.
- **Air monitoring levels in the School 21 Study Area are not expected to cause short-term or long-term non-cancer health effects.**
- **There may be a small additional lifetime cancer risk posed by living near School 21.** Based on a scenario of a person continuously breathing the air for 70 years outside School 21, it has been estimated using health protective assumptions that there may be no more than 3 additional cases of cancer among the approximately 38,600 people living in the 9 square mile study area. To put this matter into perspective, the National Institute of Health estimates that every person in the United States has a 1-in-3 chance, or 12,867 persons in the study area, of contracting some form of cancer if they live to age 70 anywhere in the nation from all causes including smoking, diet, lifestyle, genetic factors, and the environment.
- **Air quality levels in the study area do not call for closing any facilities or vacating homes, including:**
  - Any school in the study area, including School 21.
  - Any homes in the neighborhood, including those directly adjacent to the plant.
  - Any industrial or commercial air pollution source, including Citizens Gas & Coke.

No additional air pollution regulations have been recommended as a result of the study.
- **Benzene levels measured at the School 21 air monitor have declined steadily since 2001.**
- **Benzene levels recorded in the study area suggest continued focus on further emissions reductions in the area, including through:**
  - Reasonable emissions reductions at Citizens Gas & Coke Utility.
  - Working with businesses throughout the study area to identify and implement further air emission reduction opportunities.
  - Examining potential traffic flow improvements in the neighborhood to reduce vehicle emissions, including benzene.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q. Is it safe to breathe the air in the neighborhood around School 21?**

A. Air monitoring levels gathered in the School 21 study area are not expected to cause short-term or long-term health effects due to air toxics exposure.

There may be a small additional lifetime cancer risk posed by living near School 21. Based on a scenario of a person continuously breathing the air for 70 years outside School 21, it has been estimated using health protective assumptions that there may be no more than 3 additional cases of cancer among the approximately 38,600 people living in the 9 square mile study area. To put this matter into perspective, this contrasts to the National Institute of Health estimates that every person in the United States has a 1-in-3 chance of contracting some form of cancer if they live to age 70 anywhere in the nation.

Air quality levels in the study area do not call for closing any facilities or vacating homes, including:

- Any school in the study area including School 21.
- Any homes in the neighborhood, including those directly adjacent to the plant.
- Any industrial or commercial air pollution source, including Citizens Gas & Coke.

### **Q. What are the results of the School 21 Air Quality Study?**

A. No expectation of acute (short term) or chronic (long term) health effects due to air toxics. There may be a slight additional cancer risk due to exposure to benzene (using health-protective assumptions, 3 additional cancer cases over 70 years in study area).

No additional air pollution regulations have been recommended as a result of the study.

### **Q. What does the School 21 Air Quality Study recommend?**

- A. The study recommends that:
- Citizens Gas & Coke Utility implement many of the emission reduction and control activities identified by the pollution prevention assessment.
  - The City of Indianapolis examine traffic improvements to reduce mobile emissions in the study area.
  - The City of Indianapolis and IDEM work with industrial and commercial businesses in the area to explore pollution prevention opportunities.
  - The study has not recommended that IPS 21 be closed, that Citizens Gas & Coke Utility be closed, or that residents move out of the neighborhood due to air toxic levels.

**Q. Did the results of the School 21 air emissions study play a role in the decision by IPS to close School 21?**

A. Indianapolis Public School officials have publicly stated that the school was being closed for a variety of reasons, including expensive renovations that would be required to bring the facility up to federal student access standards. The results of the air quality study were not available until today. IDEM and the City were not consulted regarding the decision to close School 21. Questions regarding the reasons for closing School 21 should be directed to Indianapolis Public School officials.

**Q. Does the study include any information on the health of children and staff at School 21?**

A. Yes, the Marion County Health Department did collect some health information from the children and staff at School 21. This health information was not comprehensive due to limited information received and did not consider many other factors that could affect the health of the children and staff, such as their home environments, diet, access to health care and smoking rates in the neighborhood. Since the information was not complete, no conclusions were made based on the health information collected.

**Q. Does the School 21 Study recommend further air emissions reductions in the neighborhood?**

A. IDEM and the City of Indianapolis are working with Citizens Gas & Coke and other businesses in the neighborhood to reduce air emissions. Through voluntary efforts, Citizens Gas & Coke has steadily reduced emissions since 2001, and has an ongoing program to further reduce emissions. The City of Indianapolis also is examining potential traffic flow improvements in the neighborhood to reduce vehicle emissions, including benzene.

**Q. Will the air monitor remain at School 21 even after the school closes?**

A. IDEM will continue operating the monitor for at least the next 6 months. A decision has not yet been made on exactly when the monitor will be moved from the School 21 site.

**Q. How will IDEM and the City monitor the Citizens Gas & Coke plant be monitored after the School 21 monitor is removed?**

A. The monitor at School 21 only supplements air emissions data continually gathered at the plant. Citizens Gas & Coke Utility is subject to daily in-plant air monitoring and inspections year-round by IDEM and the U.S. EPA which is completely independent of the monitor.

**Q. Does Citizens Gas & Coke Utility have an air pollution permit to emit benzene?**

A. Citizens Gas & Coke has an air pollution permit based upon local, State, and Federal air pollution regulations. Although the permit does not have a numeric limit for benzene, the U.S. EPA has established work practice requirements to minimize benzene emissions.

**To view the full report, visit IDEM's Website at:**

<http://www.IN.gov/idem/programs/air/index.html>

**For further information, please contact:**

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**Air Pollution complaints – Mayor's Action Center – 327-4622 or [www.indygov.org/MAC](http://www.indygov.org/MAC)**